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WESTERN OREGON PLAN REVISIONS

PLAN REVISIONS NEWS
WESTERN OREGON

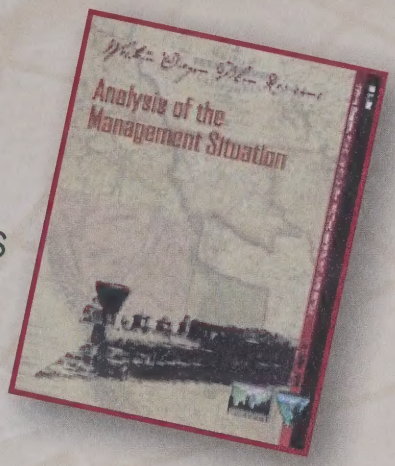
ANALYSIS OF THE MANAGEMENT SITUATION – NEWSLETTER ISSUE NO. 2 DECEMBER 2005

BLM

Salem, Eugene, Roseburg, Coos Bay, Medford, and Klamath Falls Offices

The Analysis of Management Situation

A compilation of information about the land and resources under BLM's management in western Oregon



A brand-new publication is available! In this newsletter we've prepared a Summary/Outline of the information presented in the 170-page Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) published in October 2005.

The Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) is an integral part of the BLM's planning process. It is our way of putting the existing information that will be important to the planning process, all in one place. It's not a document that makes decisions for the BLM, but a document we write for ourselves that paints a picture of where we are as we prepare a new plan or revise an old one.

Copies of the AMS are available in public libraries in western Oregon, or you can request either a paper copy or electronic copy on Compact Disk (PDF format) by phoning or writing the Western Oregon Plans Revision project office at: Telephone: (503) 808-6629, Address: P.O. Box 2965, Portland, Oregon 97208; or by email: orwopr@or.blm.gov. Also, the six BLM offices in western Oregon will have a limited number of the AMS document available to share. Because of the cost of printing these documents, we're hopeful you'll consider a CD version instead of the limited number of paper copies.

Welcome...

to the second issue of the Bureau of Land Management's Western Oregon Plan Revision Newsletter. In this issue you'll find a summary of the "Analysis of the Management Situation" document and information about the next opportunity to provide input into the plan revision process.

Formal Scoping Completed

The first public phase of the Western Oregon Plan Revision project ended on October 21, 2005. During this process, we attended or hosted about 75 meetings with community groups, special interest groups, elected officials, and many others and we received about 3,000 e-mail messages, letters and written or oral suggestions from the public. We'll now use that information to help shape future steps in the planning process. If you attended any of the meetings or sent us your comments, thank you for your interest in the planning process. We're now summarizing the comments received and we'll share that summary in a future planning newsletter.

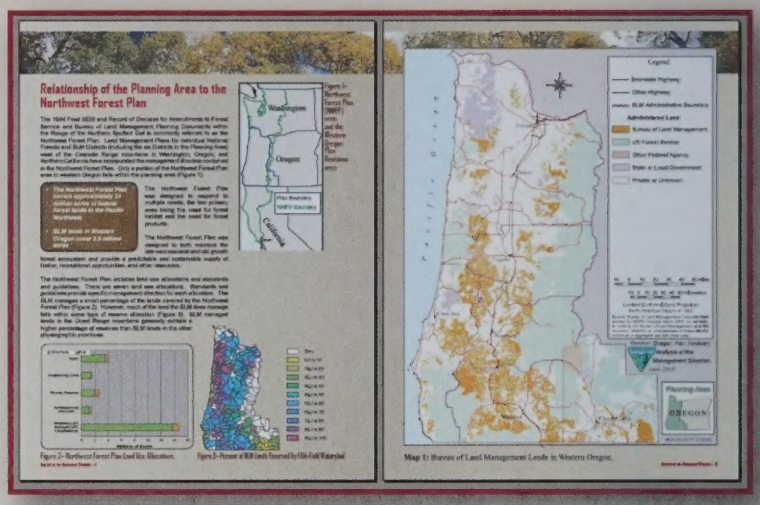
Next Formal Opportunity for Input?

With the next issue of the newsletter, we'll outline the range of alternatives we propose to analyze in detail in the Environmental Impact Statement. We won't be asking for votes or preferences on alternatives, but we want to be sure we have a reasonable range of alternatives before starting the analysis of effects of each alternative.

The proposed alternatives will be described within a document called The Planning Criteria and State Director's Guidance. That document will be available for your review. The document will describe the criteria, methods, and assumptions we propose to use as we analyze the effects of each of the alternatives and perhaps variations on each alternative.

Overview of the Document

The Analysis of the Management Situation is a full-color publication that presents information not only in text, but on 12 maps, 26 tables, and 80 figures. Some data is presented about the entire planning area, and other data is given for each of the six districts in the planning area.



The document has two chapters:
Chapter 1 – Introduction; and
Chapter 2 - Area Profile, which comprises the bulk of the text.

What is the purpose of the Analysis of the Management Situation?

The Analysis of the Management Situation is an important preliminary step in BLM's Western Oregon Plan Revisions process. Its purpose is to:

- Determine BLM's ability to respond to identified issues and opportunities.
- Provide the basis for BLM managers to formulate reasonable alternatives, consistent with multiple use principles.

In the AMS are descriptions of the existing environment and current BLM management, along with other compiled planning data. Much of this information will be carried forward to the revised plans and environmental impact statement.

Key Findings of the Analysis of Management Situation

Listed below are some key findings that emerged in preparing the AMS and that are likely to be important considerations in developing alternatives for the Resource Management Plan revision.

General Key Findings

- Management actions designed to avoid short-term impacts are often unlikely to achieve long-term ecological objectives.
- Choices made in the plan revisions could substantially affect the level of timber harvest and associated contribution to economies in western Oregon.
- Litigation remains a substantial influence affecting attainment of the timber harvest anticipated under the Northwest Forest Plan, particularly harvest of older timber and fire salvage.

Key Findings - Forest Management

- Disturbance, whether natural or management activities, is essential to how forest ecosystems function.
- Most old-growth forests on BLM lands in western Oregon developed under low and highly variable densities. Young managed forest stands are unlikely to develop similar structure to existing old-growth stands without further management or natural disturbance.
- Thinning can speed development of old-growth forest structure.
- Implementing silviculture treatments during the proper phase of forest stand development is critical for attainment of management objectives at the least economic cost.

Key Findings - Other Resource Values

- Areas that are highly rich in rare plant species provide opportunities to develop focused management strategies.
- BLM's ability to influence outcomes for forest health, wildlife and fisheries habitat, and watershed function varies with ownership patterns, percent ownership, and location of BLM lands in the landscape.
- Although BLM does not manage the majority of habitat along streams with listed fish, the BLM can target limiting habitat factors for fish populations.
- The RMP revision should be coordinated with recovery plans for threatened and endangered species.
- Existing riparian reserves include areas that do not significantly contribute to water quality or flow protection or processes.
- Management direction for off-highway vehicle designations on certain BLM lands in western Oregon need modification to meet challenges of increasing off-highway vehicle use.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction of the Analysis of the Management Situation

Within this chapter are four sub-sections: Purpose of the Analysis of the Management Situation; Description of the Planning Area, Resources, Programs; Current Management Situation; and Key Findings. Topics addressed are:

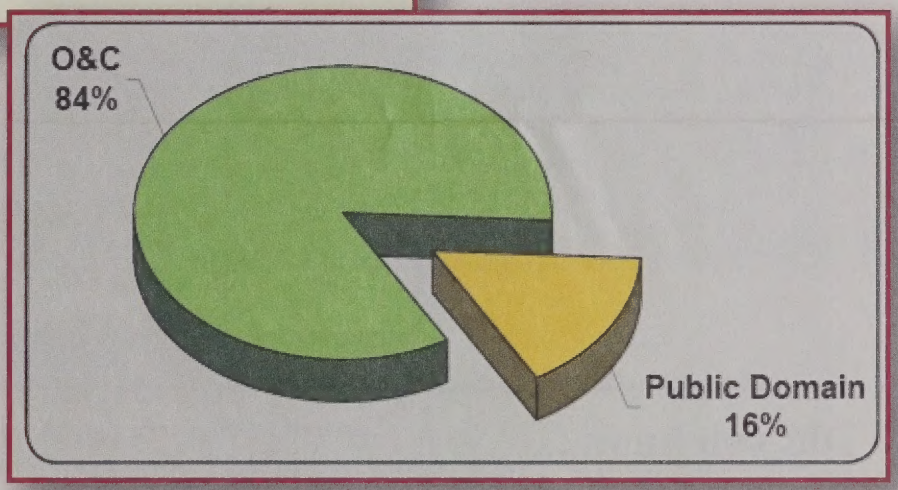
- How the AMS assists with the resource management plan process.
- Relationship of the planning area to the Northwest Forest Plan.
- Oregon and California Railroad Land and Public Domain Lands and their management differences.
- Land ownership patterns, data, and natural resource management.
- Existing plans and management decisions, including descriptions of the seven land use allocations BLM made in the 1995 Resource Management Plans for the six BLM districts in western Oregon.

Did you know?

Facts revealed in the AMS

- *BLM in western Oregon manages just over 10% of the federal lands covered under the Northwest Forest Plan.*
- *About two-thirds of BLM managed land in western Oregon is currently within some type of reserve status.*
- *Generally, O&C land is located in the odd-numbered sections, and private land is located in the even-numbered sections. This fragmented, checkerboard ownership pattern has serious implications for management.*

From the AMS: 84% of BLM land in western Oregon is managed under the provisions of the O&C Lands Act of 1937. Sixteen percent are classified as Public Domain and managed under *Federal Land Policy and Management Act.*



Chapter 2 – Area Profile

Chapter 2 consists of descriptions of the existing condition of the resources, resource uses, and programs related to BLM management. Chapter 2 also identifies management opportunities for each described resource. These opportunities will be considered by managers in formulating alternatives. The following provides an overview of information in Chapter 2. Consideration of this information will likely have some impact on future harvest types and levels, as well as associated management activities, across the plan area.

An underlying assumption in the Analysis of the Management Situation is that BLM lands will be managed in compliance with requirements of the O&C Lands Act, Clean Water Act, Endangered Species Act, and other applicable laws.

Did you know?

Facts revealed in the AMS

- *Historically (pre-European settlement), about half of the plan area's landscape was in old-growth forest (200 years+) at any one time.*
- *Currently, less than 10% of the landscape (all ownerships) is old-growth forest.*
- *Currently, 15% of BLM land in western Oregon is old-growth forest.*
- *Approximately 33% of the planning area is young, managed stands (plantations). Without continued active management, these stands have a high risk of catastrophic disturbance (disease, wildfire, blow-down) and limited ecosystem function.*

Ecology – Forest ecosystems on BLM lands in western Oregon are dynamic. This section of the AMS highlights such findings as the importance of disturbances in proper functioning of forest ecosystems and how management can simulate natural disturbances.

Social-Economic – This section addresses factors such as increasing population and new technology, and their effect on BLM management. There are also discussions about the shared revenues generated by sale of timber and other goods and services from federal lands and the importance of such funds for local governments.

Did you know?

Facts revealed in the AMS

- *In recent years, four southwestern Oregon counties (Douglas, Curry, Josephine, and Klamath) received 10 % to 20% of their annual budget from Federal lands-related payments. The Secure Rural Schools legislation, which provides for these funds (based on federal timber lands), expires September 30, 2006.*
- *BLM lands contribute to employment and income in industries other than those related to lumber and wood-related products. Dispersed and developed recreation, commercial fishing, hunting, special forest products, mining, grazing and forestry services all contribute to the region's economic health, and they are all affected by changes in federal forest management.*

Did you know?

Facts revealed in the AMS

- *There are 221 wildlife species of special interest within the plan area, including 116 species that are protected under federal or state endangered species status or receive management consideration under the BLM's Special Status Species Program.*
- *About one million acres of BLM land in Oregon is designated as Northern Spotted Owl critical habitat.*

Wildlife - Separate discussions are included specific to the northern spotted owl, marbled murrelet, Pacific Fisher, Columbian white-tailed deer, migratory land birds, cavity nesters, deer and elk. Data is presented about special status species, habitat types of key wildlife species, population trends, and various management directives.

Timber – The AMS provides considerable data about forest lands and timber harvest in the plan area. It notes the wide variety of conditions across the landscape and the impact of previous management. The historic variation in the amount of timber harvest from BLM lands is illustrated with Figure 27.

Another figure (#29) illustrates how much of the BLM-managed lands are included in reserves under the present plans.

The timber section discusses the continuing pattern of protest, appeal and litigation surrounding the harvest of timber from BLM-managed lands. A large percentage of the sales offered for bid have had some level of administrative challenge or litigation challenging the sale. In response to litigation, regeneration harvest of older timber and thinning to hasten old-growth conditions in the reserves have not been completed as anticipated under present plans. See Figure 33.

Figure 27 – BLM Sales over the Last Five Decades

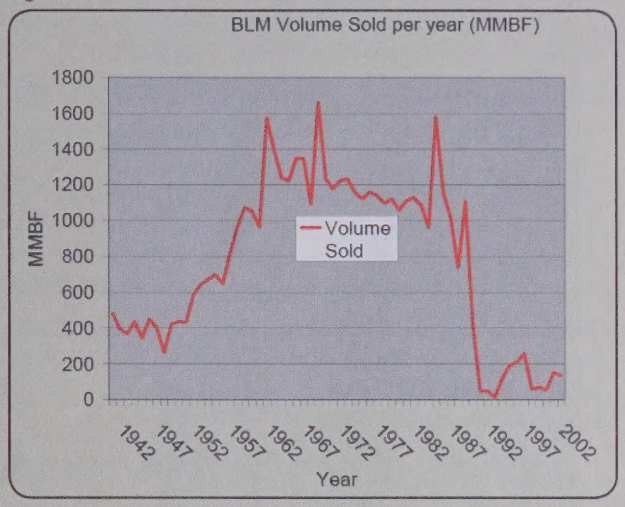


Figure 29 – Acres of Matrix, Adaptive Management Areas and Reserves by District

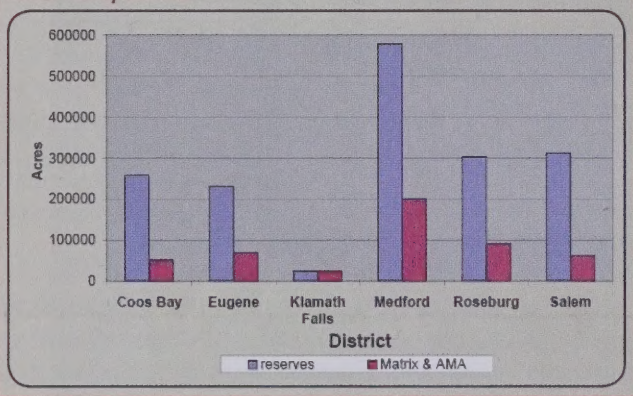
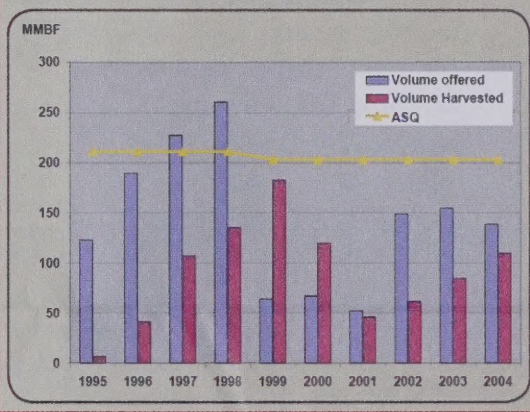


Figure 33 – Volumes Offered Versus Harvested by Fiscal Year



Silviculture – This section provides descriptions of various silvicultural activities (including reforestation, regeneration harvests, precommercial thinning, pruning, commercial thinning, and density management) and the importance of each to developing forest stands for timber production, providing wildlife habitat, promoting old-growth characteristics, and maintaining and protecting riparian areas.

Plants and Fungi – The Plants and Fungi section describes the Special Status Species Program and highlights some of the species occurring on BLM-managed lands within the planning area. The narrative notes that although there are increased numbers of special status species, management complexity has decreased and flexibility has broadened with integration of the Survey and Manage Program

Did you know?

Facts revealed in the AMS

- *BLM manages 357,000 acres of the 8 million acres of old-growth forests in western Oregon.*
- *Historically, BLM timber harvest was 15 to 20 percent of the total timber harvested in western Oregon, but under the current plan BLM contributes less than 3 percent.*
- *Most lands managed by BLM in western Oregon are reserves. Districts vary from 50% to 83% reserved, equating to a western Oregon average of 77% reserved.*
- *83% of the old-growth stands (200+ years as of 1992) on western Oregon BLM are currently reserved from harvest.*
- *The total timber volume offered for harvest in western Oregon averaged 63% of planned levels for the first eight years of plan implementation.*

into the Bureau's Special Status Species Program. Further, more than a million acres of BLM-managed land in western Oregon have been surveyed for occurrence of special status species, and additional recovery and conservation plans are in place.

Noxious weeds are also discussed in this section. Ongoing measures to address weed control include:

- Preparation of environmental documents/reports to address herbicide use and impacts of using non-herbicide treatments.
- Increase in number of partnerships to include: two regional species working groups, six Cooperative Weed Management Areas, and a regional weed partnership with more than 80 member organizations.
- Initiation of a native plant program in the National Fire Plan.
- New policy on use of native species plant materials.

Did you know?

Facts revealed in the AMS

- *Since 1995, BLM has funded and implemented restoration projects totaling $47.1 million.*
- *Much of the restoration funding (49% or $23.1 million) was spent on improving fish passage, and another big expenditure was rock surfacing of roads (35% or $16.6 million) to decrease sedimentation.*
- *Medford District spent much of the restoration funding ($16.1 million); Roseburg and Coos Bay spent $10.3 and $9 million, respectively; and the other three districts ranged from $0.3 million to $6.6 million.*

Fisheries – Discussions focus on restoration activities, including fish passage improvement, road work, wetland and riparian restoration, and instream work. Forest management plays a role in fisheries management, too, in regards to riparian reserve management and aquatic habitat. Management opportunities identified include targeting restoration efforts to priority areas and linking revised plans to ESA recovery plans currently being prepared by National Marine Fisheries Service. A table is included identifying potential refinement of current management direction for fisheries.

Hydrology – The Aquatic Conservation Strategy is discussed relative to BLM management, the intermingled land ownership pattern, and riparian area management. Watershed analysis has been completed in nearly all watersheds in the planning area. At the end of the Hydrology section is a table identifying potential refinement of current management for water. Some notes include:

- Riparian reserve widths often do not match the structure and function of riparian areas.
- Need to re-evaluate Tier 2 Key Watersheds, relative to 1996 Safe Water Drinking Act Amendments.
- Need to refine management direction for water, including Best Management Practices and salvage and hardwood conversions within riparian reserves.

Did you know?

Facts revealed in the AMS

- *Fire exclusion has created higher than historic levels of ground fuels and thickets of understory vegetation that can carry fire into the tops of the trees.*
- *The lack of thinning and slash treatments have created conditions that increase the potential for large destructive fires.*
- *In some cases, harvest practices have removed the larger, more fire-resilient trees.*
- *Not managing trees in riparian reserves makes them susceptible to intense wildfire.*
- *In 2002, nearly one million acres burned in Oregon alone.*
- *In drier forests of southern Oregon, 50% of the landscapes are susceptible to high severity fires, compared to 20% historically.*

Fire/Fuels Management - References are provided about planning direction put in place following major fire seasons in 1996 and 2000, including the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, which mandates managing forests to be more fire resilient. The need is addressed for increased fuel reduction and other projects to reduce risk in wildland urban interface areas.

Air Quality – The BLM considers how its management activities, especially prescribed burning, could impact air quality. Of particular attention are areas near population centers and special management areas. Treatment of woody debris by non-burning methods, prior to doing prescribed burns, is identified as a possible way to maintain air quality.

Recreation, Visual Resources Management, and the National Conservation System – This section includes discussions about Special Recreation Management Areas, Extensive Recreation Management Areas, Back Country By-Ways, trails, off-highway vehicle designations, open areas, limited areas, and closed areas. The need is recognized to reclassify Wilderness Study Areas due to new national policy. A table identifies potential refinement of current management direction for recreation.

Did you know?

Facts revealed in the AMS

- *Seventeen percent of all outdoor recreation activities in western Oregon occur on BLM lands.*
- *Three areas have been either newly established or incorporated into the National Landscape Conservation System since completion of the western Oregon resource management plans: Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, Elkhorn Creek Wild & Scenic River, and Yaquina Head Outstanding Natural Area.*
- *The planning area has 100 miles of Wild & Scenic Rivers; 14,400 acres of Wilderness; and 5 Wilderness Study Areas.*

Soils – It is noted that previous soil descriptions are sufficient for this planning effort, but further refinement of the location of unstable soils may be desirable. Refinement of the use of the "Timber Production Capability Classification" system is suggested.

Livestock - Livestock grazing occurs on 22 percent of the planning area, mostly in two districts (Medford and Klamath Falls). A focal point of discussion in this section is the Rangeland Health Assessments, which are on schedule to be completed by 2009 for all 191 allotments. To date, about half of these assessments have been completed.

Wild Horse and Burros - There is one wild horse herd management area in the planning area, administered by the Klamath Falls Field Office. Management of this area has no known conflicts with other resources.

Did you know?

Facts revealed in the AMS

- *The western Oregon BLM districts manage 108 Special Management Areas, which will be re-evaluated in the plan revisions process.*
- *The planning process will consider special management designation for another 17 areas that were previously nominated and placed under interim management.*

Special Management Areas – These areas need management attention to protect important natural, cultural, scenic resources, or to identify natural hazards.

Cultural and Paleontological Resources – This section provides district-specific data about cultural resources sites and inventory throughout the planning area, tribal interests of seven federally recognized tribes, and data about educational outreach events.

Lands and Roads – In making any land tenure adjustments, the BLM considers its three land tenure zones: Zone 1 – Retain and acquire; Zone 2 – Exchange and consolidate; and Zone 3 – Dispose. Most BLM lands in the planning area are within land tenure Zone 2. A small percentage (about 55,000 acres) is in Zone 3. Other considerations include new laws and requirements: Oregon Public Lands Transfer and Protection Act, and the Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act. This section of the AMS also addresses access and transportation right-of-way program, energy development and transmission, communication sites, withdrawals, and classifications.

Did You Know?

- *Most mining activity within the BLM western Oregon planning area occurs in the Medford District, which has 638 of the 831 mining claims plan-wide and 108 exploration notices subject to the 3809 mining regulations.*

Minerals – Sporadic small-scale placer gold mining and rock quarrying are the main types of mining activity on BLM-managed lands in the planning area. A table in this section lists the number of mining claims and exploration notices for each of the six BLM districts.

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What is the Bureau of Land Management's Western Oregon Plan Revisions Project?

In September of 2005, the Bureau of Land Management formally began a public process to revise its six Resource Management Plans in western Oregon. We went to the public and asked for help in defining what issues should be addressed in the planning process. Many issues were raised, including: the legal interpretation of the O&C Lands Act of 1937, how we manage timber and other vegetation, management of old-growth, maintaining and improving habitat for wildlife, maintaining clean water, maintaining a sustainable and predictable flow of forest products, the use and management of fire, and management of off-highway-vehicles.

We will consider that information as we prepare some management alternatives and criteria for developing plan revisions and an environmental impact statement.

The project will be completed in 2008.

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